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*THE CHURCHES AND THE PREVAILING SOCIAL
SENTIMENT*

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Churches in the great religions have been allies of all ancient governments and most modern ones. The Emperor of Japan was believed to have, and in the popular mind still has, intimate relations with the heavenly powers. He used to be held in a seclusion suitable for this peculiar relationship to Deity. The Emperor of China for thousands of years under various dynasties was a high priest, whose offerings and prayers were peculiarly acceptable to Deity, and frequently procured for his people good seedtimes and good harvests, although he sometimes failed to avert pestilences, droughts, floods, and famines. The Indian castes are family clans and trades-unions with strong religious sanctions. The Koran contains the foundations of civil law as well as of ecclesiastical, and the Sultan claims succession to the religious as well as to the civil authority of the Caliphs. Under the feudal system there was a chaplain in every great noble's house, and the king ruled "by the grace of God," and by the same grace transmitted his office to his son. Both Napoleon the Great and Napoleon the Little claimed as Emperor the support of the Church; but Napoleon the Third never seemed to see the extraordinary pathos in the formula he used so much, "By the grace of God and the national will Emperor of the French." The French Revolution tried to divorce civil government from religion, but failed to do so. National established churches supported by the state exist all over Europe, although their tenure is frail in several European countries. The American Republic has carried into practice complete religious toleration and complete separation of church and state; but every now and then some one proposes to bridge the gap between church and state by a phrase such as "Vox populi, vox Dei," or to "recognize" the Divine Immanence by inserting the word God in the Constitution.

With the general increase of liberty which has taken place during the last hundred years both church and state have undergone profound modifications. The church, in some measure set apart from government, is thrown back on its original functions of cultivating virtue, promoting sympathy and good-will, conducting worship, administering sacraments, and energizing the motive power of love. The state, on the other hand, becomes more and more a business agency for getting the public work well done; and the public work is more and more the application of the new sciences to the promotion of the public welfare, the abatement of nuisances and injuries, the protection of the whole people from physical and moral contagions, the provision of the conveniences and securities which urban life imperatively needs, and the preservation of order and peace. The Constitution of the United States has promoted and encouraged the safe development of a form of government for the people which trusts everything ultimately to the intelligence, good judgment, and quick conscience of a majority of the people. It has developed a democracy which is the most complete representative in the modern world of the principles of the Protestant Reformation, with religious toleration added. The Reformation stood for the right of private judgment with individual responsibility. It transferred religious authority from an ecclesiastical institution to a book, the Bible, and hence made universal education a necessity. The free, responsible individual must be able to read, else not only the individual but society might go wrong. Cromwell built not only his army but his Commonwealth on the Congregationalists and Independents; and he was the "Protector" of liberty at home and abroad. Religion was paramount in the minds of both the Pilgrims and the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay, and for a hundred and fifty years the ministers of religion were the ruling class on New England soil, sharing their power, however, with the magistrates and ship-masters.

By the time the American Republic was fifty years old its fundamental principles of freedom, brotherhood, and equal justice had begun to develop a new kind of social state, and therewith a new relation of the numerous and diversified churches to the community as a whole; and by the time the Republic

was a hundred years old there had arisen in this new society a new kind of social sentiment which was really an adaptation and modification of the Christian sense of human brotherhood. Two forces in the industrial world hastened the development of this social sentiment—the corporation with limited liability, and the liberty of association of like-thinking or like-hoping people for the accomplishment of public objects which seemed to them good. Incorporation with limited liability has proved to be a powerful promoter of industrial efficiency and of co-operation by small or large groups of persons in industrial production, and also in carrying on private works of education, religion, and charity. Both the right to incorporate and the right to associate have proved to be invaluable aids and supporters of free institutions.

The new social sentiments developed in the last half of the nineteenth century are, however, by no means peculiar to the democratic society of the United States. Indeed, they have been more rapidly developed and carried to a greater extreme in European countries, where despotic or aristocratic government still lingers, than in the United States. Although they are modifications and applications of the Christian doctrine of human brotherhood, they did not originate in the Christian churches. In fact, many of the most vigorous exponents of the social sentiments have been men and women who had but slight connection with any of the churches, or who even thought of the churches as anti-social. The Greek Church, the Roman Church, and the great majority of the Protestant churches have not shown much active sympathy with the new social sentiment; and a considerable proportion of the men and women devoted to the social propaganda have been persons who maintain no connection with any church. The social sentiment has found active expression in efforts to improve by legislation the condition of the poorest and most laborious classes, to contend against the evils of alcoholism, gambling, and prostitution, to raise wages, shorten hours, improve lodgings, and to provide the crowded city populations with the means of innocent and wholesome enjoyment. Some of these objects have long been striven for by the trades-unions, and these unions have therefore been active in building up the

new social sentiments, although their own leading sentiment is an exclusive class feeling. New agencies have also been created to give practical expression to these sentiments, such as the "settlements" in poor quarters of cities, the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, and the numerous clubs of boys and girls, young men and young women, which undertake to supply guidance to satisfactory work and to good play, and to maintain in their members ideal standards of conduct. Some of these agencies may fairly be called religious; but many of them say little about religious topics, and take pains to avoid religious teaching which could possibly be called denominational.

Since the twentieth century opened, the churches have begun to take account of the social position thus created and to inquire into their own duties in connection therewith. They find that social service offers a new field for church activities; that it is something very different from the old forms of kindly relief for special cases of distress or disease; that the new social service deals with common conditions under which their livelihood is earned by thousands of persons, families grow up, and successive generations thrive or deteriorate. These conditions have in many cases been created by the factory system and by the transfer of millions of people from country life to city life. They have also been caused by the new liberties which the population as a whole now enjoy, and by the comparatively new reluctance to take life by judicial process, to imprison, or to exercise any physical repression on the ruder and more vicious elements of the population. Social service is no longer alms-giving, the providing of hospitals to die in, or poor-houses in which to prolong an unproductive and miserable existence. Modern social service means curing, remedying, finding employment, enabling a distressed family to resume self-support, defending the weak or defective against cruelty and oppression, catching and reforming the deserter from family responsibilities, resisting natural catastrophes, and repairing the damages they occasion. Almost all social service nowadays requires something more than sympathy and compassion. It requires knowledge of economics and applied science, and careful discrimination between those measures which break down diligence, frugality, foresight, self-reliance, and

family affection, and those which foster such virtues. The churches should all exert an active moral force. They should be fountains of religious emotion, but also steady sources of moral action on the part both of individuals and of society. They therefore should never support social undertakings which have a degrading effect on individual character, and should always be careful to discriminate between the good and the bad effects of philanthropic undertakings which clearly produce mixed effects, some good, some bad. Moreover, the churches should always insist that ample inquiry and discussion precede every effort at reform by or through legislation and the executive action of public officials.

The evangelical churches in the United States have lately manifested some disposition to unite in good works, prompted by the newly developed social sentiment. Having had ample experience of the impossibility of uniting on creeds, liturgies, and ecclesiastical politics, they cannot help hoping that they have found a basis of unity in their common purpose to render social service; that is, to engage in co-operative good works. Hence, federations, federal councils, and comprehensive commissions. Here, however, new dangers may be encountered. Seeing the dangers of exciting religious emotions which cannot be transformed on the instant into loving action, and feeling keenly the loss of influence which churches in general have lately suffered, individual ministers in charge of churches and other leaders may urge young people to take up some form of social service without adequate preparation and without competent direction or guidance, the ministers themselves having had no practice in the kind of work to which they urge their young parishioners, and possessing no trained judgment as to the probable results of the young people's labors.

I find a good example of rash and ill-considered action on the part of churches in the Principles adopted at Chicago, December 9, 1912, by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, which declare that the churches must stand for sixteen separate propositions, some of which are axiomatic but vague; some so lacking in precision of definiteness that they suggest no specific action; some grossly exaggerated, though of good tendency; and some positively mischievous, because they sug-

gest forms of collective action which are distinctly demoralizing to individual workers. It is of no use for the churches to declare that they stand for "proper" regulation of marriage, "proper" housing, and "proper" education and recreation for every child; for the real questions are, what *proper* regulation of marriage *is*, what *proper* housing *is*, and what *kind* of education and recreation every child should have.

One of these Principles is that the churches must stand for the abolition of "child labor." By child labor is probably meant precocious labor in unwholesome factories. It can hardly be intended that the churches should stand for the abolition of child labor on the farm and in the household, labor which is wholesome in moderation and altogether desirable for the bringing up of children and the safe and happy development of the family as a whole.

Another of these Principles implies that the physical and moral health of the community can be protected by the regulation of the conditions of toil for women. Now, legislation can improve the conditions under which women labor in factories and shops, and protect married women from overwork before and after confinement; but this kind of legislation will not "safeguard the physical and moral health of the community." That health can only be adequately protected by the development of sound character in the members of the community, both men and women.

This Declaration as to what the churches must stand for exhibits a strong tendency to attribute the moral evils in the community to poverty. One reads frequently in the public prints that the cause of prostitution is the failure of employers to pay young women what is called a "living wage." Must the churches stand for that doctrine? It seems to me a demoralizing and degrading doctrine in itself and in all its implications. To my thinking, poverty is a far safer moral condition than inordinate wealth.

Another of the Principles for which these churches must stand calls for the protection of the individual and society from the social, economic, and moral waste of the liquor traffic. The liquor traffic is a waste; but that fact is not the principal reason for

opposing it, and the churches ought not to put that motive forward as the principal one. The burning question about the liquor traffic is how to restrict it most wisely. Is prohibition the best policy, or local option? If local option, how shall the transportation of liquor by public carrier be regulated? The Principle for which the churches must stand, according to this proclamation, gives the voter no clear indication how he should use his vote, and dodges the real questions.

The Declaration says vaguely that the churches must stand for the conservation of public health; but what action shall the churches advocate for diminishing the ravages of the venereal diseases, and for suppressing the profitable commerce carried on publicly by both men and women to gratify the lustful propensities of men? These are practical and very difficult questions, calling for decision in action. A just conservation of the public health raises many questions concerning the use of the collective force and the collective resources of the community, in restriction of individual liberty, but in promotion of both public and private safety. Shall the churches support the public authorities in compelling vaccination and making free distribution of diphtheria antitoxin, or shall they resist these methods of conserving the public health? Shall the churches advocate the expenditure of public money for playgrounds, and the provision at public expense of illustrated lectures, dance halls, public concerts, and other means of popular recreation?

This Declaration of Principles by the Federal Council speaks of the "right of all men to the opportunity for self-maintenance," and of "encroachments" on that right. Who gave men that right? Against whom is it to be enforced, and by what means? Who are they who encroach upon that right, and how is the church to deal with them, if discovered? The sentence throughout suggests the existence of social wrongs, but does not specify them or indicate any clear line of action for remedying them. This is an injurious kind of incitement to unjust opinions about the existing industrial organization.

The churches must also stand, according to this Declaration, for suitable provision for the old age of workers and for those incapacitated by injury. Does this recommendation mean that

all old people are to be provided for at the expense of the public? Does it mean that the churches must stand for the demoralizing and enfeebling, non-contributory, old-age pension legislation? Does it mean that the churches are to become responsible for the neglect of children to take care of their old parents, or for that lack of industry, frugality, and self-control which brings people to old age without any provision for comfort in declining years?

The Principles adopted by the Federal Council include the following remarkable statement: "For the gradual and reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practicable point, and for that degree of leisure for all which is a condition of the highest human life." One would suppose from these phrases that labor was always a curse and leisure a blessing, and that the progress of civilization depended on reduction of the first and increase of the second. The facts are just the other way. The progress of civilization depends on the steady, productive labor of the entire community. The hours of labor might be so far reduced as to diminish disastrously the total product of the community below the amount necessary to maintain the life of the community as it is and to provide for improvement and progress. Leisure in the sense of loafing, idleness, or inactivity is not necessary to the highest human life. What is necessary, or at least expedient, is variety in productive and pleasurable activities. The notions that labor is a curse and leisure the indispensable condition of contentment are both thoroughly mischievous, and if carried into practice would destroy civilization and make real happiness impossible.

There is also in this Declaration of Principles an apparent endorsement of the uniform, or minimum, wage, which is one of the most deplorable doctrines and practices of trades-unions, demoralizing to the competent workmen and cruel to the weak, the unskilful, and the old.

The final Declaration of the Federal Council, "For the most equitable division of the product of industry that can ultimately be devised," is one that the communist, the collectivist, the socialist, the individualist, and the nihilist might all think themselves entitled to subscribe to, so vague and elusive is it. Churches

which are invited to co-operate in social service ought to have at least similar aims and well-defined plans for the common work. It is doubtless desirable to secure the co-operation of many of the religious and philanthropic institutions called churches in common, helpful, social activities or good works; but that co-operation ought to be based on clear and specific propositions.

In regard to the directing of the young people connected with churches into the various activities called social service, the dangers of that policy may be avoided and its benefits reaped by either of two methods, both of which are already in use. The young workers may be given in college or in schools for social workers an adequate training for the special line of work they propose to follow before they assume any serious responsibility, or they may be put as probationers or apprentices under the direction of experienced paid workers, who will employ them as recorders and cataloguers, let them witness some of the daily work, and soon ascertain whether they possess the insight, tact, and vigor necessary for permanent service.

Before the churches can safely enlist for the new kinds of social service, the ministers who lead the churches ought to have devoted a considerable part of their professional study to subjects adapted to prepare them for social service, such as economics, government, and the inductive method of finding truth. They should have been specially trained to avoid broad generalizations from few particulars, and unlimited inferences from limited groups of facts. The traditional training of the minister in all churches of all religions has been chiefly deductive, speculative, philosophical, historical, literary, and emotional. There is the most urgent need of making a considerable part of it inductive, observational, and economic. Every minister and every philanthropist needs practice in scientific experimentation, in the selection of the promising experiment, and in the elimination from his selected experiment, if possible, of all irrelevant or uninstructional variables. It is in this way that the scientific investigator demonstrates his capacity and wins his success.

Such additions to the traditional training for the ministry will not make the ministers of the future any less spiritual, enthusiastic, devoted, or altruistic than the ministers of the past. The

strongest evidence existing today of the attuning of the human mind to the Intelligence which created and upholds the universe is the process by which the scientific investigator projects his imagination beyond the present limits of knowledge, and conceives an hypothesis which guides him safely to new truth. The hypothesis is not always verified; but the fact that it is not seldom verified by subsequent experimentation suggested by the hypothesis is the superb demonstration which the inductive method has supplied, that man's finite thinking and loving is akin to God's infinite thinking and loving.

It is imperative that the minister who is to practise social service himself, or to exhort others to it, should have obtained in his own person and through his own experience a thorough knowledge of the inductive philosophy and of its applications in the promotion of human welfare and of progressive civilization. The churches and all other philanthropic institutions must learn how new truth about human society is to be acquired, little by little, step by step, through thorough and candid inquiry into the existing facts, and then through careful study, first, of the causes of existing conditions, and finally, of the most promising remedies. For such work the churches are not yet well organized, and the ministers are not yet well educated. In the mean time, the churches may best give active support to the well-organized agencies which employ experts in social service and in scientific, social, economic, and medical research. There are many such agencies which are employing men of good will, sound judgment, and practised skill. Let the churches support them with sympathy, comprehension, praise, and money. Gradually they will learn how to employ experts themselves, and to co-operate with each other in so doing. The medical work of foreign missions illustrates the gains that will come to the churches through the exercises of these new powers. There will be no abridgement of the churches' ancient and imperishable function of teaching men faith, hope, and love.